

RECENT LITERATURE.

Elliot's *Shore Birds*, 2d Ed. — Our extended notice of this work (*Auk*, Jan. 1896, pp. 64-66) leaves little to be said now, beyond renewing our felicitations on the success which Mr. Elliot's lending a hand to popularize ornithology has achieved, as witnessed by the call for another edition in a year from original date of publication. The second edition remains substantially the same as the first, though, as stated by the author in his new preface, "the letter press has been carefully examined and the few typographical errors that may have existed in the first edition have been corrected. The kindly criticism, also, of my colleagues on these matters has been of considerable assistance. In the Appendix the Key to the Families has been slightly rearranged, but not changing in any way the definitions." The omnipresence if not omnipotence of the printer's devil is displayed in this new preface, which leaves the misprints *Squaturolo* and *Helodromus* to be corrected in the next edition of this admirable work, which we expect to see in due course. — E. C.

Elliot's *Gallinaceous Game Birds of North America*.¹ — Seldom are the original and next edition of a book on birds published so almost simultaneously as to reach an active reviewer's desk together, but such is the result of a happy conjunction of authorial and publicational ability in the present instance. We understand that the first edition was exhausted in a month; the second immediately appeared. We believe it is identical, except in the appearance of the explaining words on the title-page, there having hardly been time for sandpapering, even had any places needing that process been observed. The plain form of the book is well made in all its appointments, presenting a very attractive appearance, like most of Mr. F. P. Harper's issues; the large paper copies are sumptuous, almost to be styled luxurious.

¹ The | Gallinaceous | Game Birds | of | North America | including the Partridges, Grouse, Ptarmigan, | and Wild Turkeys; with accounts of their dispersion, habits, nesting, etc., and full descriptions of the plumage of both adult and young, together with their popular and scientific names. | A book written both for those who love to seek these birds afield with | dog and gun, as well as those who may only desire to learn the | ways of such attractive creatures in their haunts | By | Daniel Giraud Elliot, F. R. S. E., etc. | [Etc. 5 lines of titles.] | With forty-six plates | New York | Francis P. Harper | 1897 | — 1 vol., 100 large-paper copies, numbered and signed by author, roy. 8vo, others Svo., both with rubricated title, 1st and 2nd eds. pub. nearly together, Oct. and Nov., 1897; pp. i-xviii, 19-220, pll. 1-46, and colored charts inside back cover.

After what we have said in 'The Auk' regarding Mr. Elliot's 'Shore Birds,' it will suffice to inform our special clientèle that 'Game Birds' is constructed in precisely the same fashion; the subject is changed but not the mode of treatment, and the two books form companion volumes which every sportsman, and all others whom Mr. Elliot describes upon his title page, will delight to possess. If the present work somewhat outstrips the former one in popularity, it will probably be because more persons go into the dry woods and fields than into the "demnition moist, unpleasant" haunts of the *Limicolæ*. Mr. Elliot is happy in giving a formal didactic treatise, satisfactory to the technical expert, an entertaining turn that will make his reputation as a popular writer. Amateurs can always amuse one another, but it takes a professional who knows a great deal to write for people who do not know much in the way they ought to be written for. What the public ought to want is seldom what that huge blundering collective animal does want; and he is a wise man who knows how to take the creature by the ear and keep out of the way of its business end — its heels.

Thus implying if not expressing all that need be conveyed in general regarding the present work, we turn to some particularities which we should hardly bring up if we were not writing in a journal mainly occupied with technicalities. The Turkey Question which we lately raised (Auk, July, 1897, pp. 272-275) seems to have exercised the author's patience, but he falls in line with our contention that *gallopavo* belongs to the Mexican species, and adopts *sylvestris* for the U. S. bird. This is a point of variance from the A. O. U. Check-List but in strict conformity with the A. O. U. Code; the change must be made in our next edition. We should be sorry to see *M. sylvestris ellioti* disappear from our list, but believe its proper name to be *M. s. intermedia*, for reasons which will be apparent on looking up Sennett's record of 1879. There are, no doubt, too many Ptarmigan in the book; Mr. Elliot says so, expressly, as on p. 149; but by a device which we are hardly free to criticise, because we have resorted to it ourselves too often, such a form as Allen's Ptarmigan is capitally affirmed and textually denied. One who will study the latest British Museum Catalogue of these birds will be inclined to suspect that the A. O. U. list of Ptarmigan is shaky in some other case or cases. We are pleased to find the author agreeing with us (Auk, June, 1897, p. 214) on the generic validity of *Lophortyx*, which the A. O. U. were ill-advised to degrade from its long-accustomed rank. Another good point Mr. Elliot scores is insistence upon the generic distinction between *Dendragapus* and *Canachites* — surely he should know what he meant himself when he founded the former genus more than 30 years ago. As we have remarked elsewhere (Science, July 2, 1897, p. 10), *Dendragapus* was founded for the express purpose of distinguishing certain Grouse from certain other Grouse; and for us to use it for the opposite purpose from that intended by its founder "is simply nomenclatural

locus-pocus, and as such it is puerile, unscientific, and immoral." We shall long stand disconsolate outside the pearly gates of paradise, like the Peri of oriental allegory, if we try to enter the blessed abode of nomenclatural stability on any such shifty tack as that!¹ In some other respects Mr. Elliot ties fire-brands to foxes' tails and turns them loose in the stubble of bad names on our Check-List, with a cool audacity to be expected by those who know him, and to make him a holy terror, something like the undersigned, to those who mistake misspelling for stability of nomenclature. Baird, for example, could he speak now, would thank nobody for perpetuating his blunder of *Pediocetes*; Mr. Elliot corrects it to *Pediacetes*, uniformly with our 'Key' since 1872, unconformably with our Check-List. Of what use is our obnoxious Canon XL, if it cannot be enforced? Tyros and amateurs, virtuosos and ignoramuses, may respect it, because they know no better; but it is a dead letter to such as Mr. Elliot, who will continue to disregard it with imperturbable severity. We trust that the dignified weight of his example will not be lost upon those who have need to feel its force.

Mr. Elliot's two books, 'Shore Birds' and 'Game Birds,' are, we believe, the first appearance of a veteran technician in the distinctive rôle of a publicist. Their success is assured. We point to the *Anseres* as other suitable subjects upon which to exercise a facile pen, and trust that the work required to complete a trilogy may soon appear. — E. C.

Gibson's 'Studio Neighbors.'²—The late William Hamilton Gibson, as a reporter with pen and brush of the life-histories of our familiar birds, beasts, and flowers, was without a rival. There have been and are greater writers and more talented artists than he, but in no one man was the gift of observing animals and plants and the power of describing what he saw, both verbally and pictorially, so well developed. His death was an irreparable loss to the cause of popular nature study, a loss with which we are impressed anew as we examine this posthumously published volume of his writings. It is only in part devoted to birds, for in the later years of his life Mr. Gibson's attention was largely given to flowers, but the charm with which he invested his subject is well illustrated here in the chapters entitled 'A Familiar Guest' and 'The Cuckoos and the Outwitted Cowbird.'

While we must regret Mr. Gibson's premature death, we have reason to give thanks for the legacy he has left us. In addition to the present work,

[¹ See also Science, July 2, 1897, p. 18. — J. A. A.]

² My Studio Neighbors | By | William Hamilton Gibson | Illustrated by the Author | [Seal] | New York and London | Harper & Brothers, Publishers—1898. — 8vo., pp. x + 237. Numerous illustrations.